

BUSINESS DAILY

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Should I speak out about a relative who abused me?

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(updated below)

Q. *In my teenage years, I was abused by a relative. I never told any one, got married and now have two children. But now I feel a deep urge to tell the truth.*

However, I fear that people might not understand me since the abuser is now a respected elder. Should I spill the beans or just stay with my story and keep hurting?

The Bible is clear on the importance of truth. In John 8:32 we read: “Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”.

It is possible that your guilt about not having spoken out is now catching up with you and as you put it, you have a deep urge to tell the truth so that you can be set free.

Before you tell the truth in search of freedom from guilt, let us look at the story of the adulterous woman in verses 1-11 of the same Bible chapter.

While Jesus was teaching in the temple, a woman was brought to him. The scribes and the Pharisees wanted to confirm that it was in order for her to be stoned to death because she had been caught committing adultery.

In his typical way Jesus stated: “He who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her”. Not a single person had the courage or track record to throw a stone at her; they all walked away one by one and when they had all gone away (in shame) Jesus asked the adulterous woman to go away and sin no more.

I do not know why you wish to tell it all now, but the truth that you want to tell must, in some way, improve the quality of your life and those nearest and dearest to you.

The reality about all human beings is that none is without blemish. All have fallen short of the glory of God and that, in a sense, is why they are human. So, why do you want to make “the truth an end unto itself”.

Is it perhaps because you have an element of guilt about the abuse? More importantly, do you want to tell the truth so that you can hurt the respected elder in the society? How much harm could come to you now by telling?

Is it possible that you have the urge to tell the truth, not to hurt the elder, but to bring shame and scandal to your husband, yourself and the children?

Is it, for example, possible that you feel so sad, empty, hopeless and helpless that you feel you deserve punishment for not just your sins but for the sins of all humankind?

Is this telling the truth part of your wish to commit suicide in a social sense because you feel so depressed and hopeless that no option other than death of your marriage and family seems available?

Is it possible that in the context of some other pressures in your life you have developed some abnormality in your thinking process and that what you are referring to as abuse by a relative as a teenager is false recollection?

A few years ago, a young woman went to a police station and asked to be locked up because she had just killed her baby. The police locked her up and began to investigate the matter.

During further questioning, the woman “confessed” to several more murders. She said that she had worked as a commercial sex worker in Nairobi and Mombasa, and that she had killed a number of her clients.

As the case moved from a simple report by a self-confessed child killer, the enquiry file got bigger and bigger as it turned into a full case of multiple murders.

Soon, she was being referred to as the serial killer. There was excitement all round because this type of case is rare here in Kenya.

All was going well until a senior police officer asked for “some concrete evidence” of the murders. He wanted to be told dates, times, places, ages, witnesses, and weapons used. The case began to fall apart as the woman became angry, restless and abusive.

She wanted to know why the police did not believe her any more and why they were now asking too many questions. She soon became aggressive, refused to eat and became mute.

During examination by a psychiatrist a few weeks later, it became evident that this woman was suffering from a delusional disorder, which put simply is a false belief that is held by a person even in the face of evidence that contradicts the belief. The truth is that she had killed nobody. She had no child and had not worked in Mombasa or Nairobi.

Her parents were God-fearing people; she had a good upbringing and had done well in school, only dropping out of university in her second year of law school. Her “confession” was the result of a mental illness.

What is the cause of your wish to state a truth that may hurt you, your children, husband and parents? To whom would the truth be directed and for what purpose would you want the truth to be told?

Not knowing your state of health, your spiritual inclination or even your relationship with your husband and your parents, I would suggest you seek the opinion of a trusted friend, parent or spiritual counsellor who would help you deal with the strong urge in a healthy way.

The truth can sometimes be a double-edged sword. Take care.

Update: See the [response by this columnist \(https://web.archive.org/web/20200811100105/https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/Dr-Njenga--I-do-not-condone-sexual-abuse/-/539444/1915344/-/xcmiuz/-/index.html\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20200811100105/https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/Dr-Njenga--I-do-not-condone-sexual-abuse/-/539444/1915344/-/xcmiuz/-/index.html) to readers' opinion on the article.
